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Jaime E. Rodríguez O., *'We Are Now the True Spaniards': Sovereignty, Revolution, Independence, and the Emergence of the Federal Republic of Mexico, 1808–1824* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), pp. xx+497, £62.95, hb.

WILL FOWLER

Journal of Latin American Studies / Volume 46 / Issue 02 / May 2014, pp 425 - 427
DOI: 10.1017/S0022216X14000595, Published online: 29 April 2014

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0022216X14000595

How to cite this article:

WILL FOWLER (2014). Journal of Latin American Studies, 46, pp 425-427
doi:10.1017/S0022216X14000595

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framed their actions. Indeed, Barcia's important new book provides a tantalising window on events previously unknown.

The Great African Slave Revolt of 1825 marks an exciting advance in our understanding of the cycle of rebellions affecting Cuba and the broader Atlantic world during the Age of Revolutions. All studies of the era, of African diaspora and of Cuban history will need to reckon with its significant new findings.

University of California, Berkeley

ELENA SCHNEIDER

J. Lat. Amer. Stud. 46 (2014). doi:10.1017/S0022216X14000595

Jaime E. Rodríguez O., *'We Are Now the True Spaniards': Sovereignty, Revolution, Independence, and the Emergence of the Federal Republic of Mexico, 1808–1824* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), pp. xx + 497, £62.95, hb.

Over the last ten to 15 years, as the date of Mexico's bicentenary of independence in 2010 drew closer, the study of the country's rupture from Spain and its early foundational decades became an increasingly popular subject among historians. Conferences were hosted, lectures given, and a wealth of books covering different aspects of the period published. Moving beyond the long-discredited patriotic narratives that viewed the struggle as one between an aggrieved, oppressed Mexican nation and its Spanish colonial masters, two distinct schools of thought emerged. On the one hand, there is the 'local conflict' school of historians who, by focusing on regional history, have argued that local grievances were ultimately responsible for the eruption of violence in very specific regions of provincial Mexico (whilst not in others), and that the ideas of the Enlightenment and events in Spain were actually a secondary or minor contributing factor. On the other hand, there is what I will term here the 'transatlanticists', who, by contrast, adopted a grand-scale macro interpretation that sees the 1808 collapse of the Spanish monarchy as the determining trigger behind the war, viewing events in Spain, such as the drafting of the liberal 1812 Constitution in Cádiz, as pivotal in terms of how the conflict unfolded in Mexico. Needless to say, most historians have been capable of synthesising these two not entirely conflicting approaches, interpreting the process whereby Mexico attained its independence from Spain as one that arose from a combination of strictly local and far-reaching transatlantic factors.

One of the original champions of the 'local conflict' perspective was undoubtedly Eric Van Young, who in his groundbreaking and innovative study of popular insurgency during the War of Independence, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810–1821* (Stanford University Press, 2002), was able to provide, by analysing the documents that were generated by the trials of 1,284 insurgents of humble origins, a particularly persuasive case for us to take local grievances seriously. He helped us appreciate for the first time the reasons that led the so-called popular masses to rise up in arms against and/or in favour of Spanish rule (including their ideological leanings, economic necessity, love, kinship, friendship and 'being in the wrong place at the wrong time'), and brought to our attention the localised nature of the disputes that were at the heart of the insurgency. As Van Young writes in an article entitled 'Of Tempests and Teapots' (in Elisa Servín, Leticia Reina and John Tutino (eds.), *Cycles of Conflict, Centuries of Change* (Duke University Press, 2007), p. 27), 'Where collective political violence erupted in village

Mexico, it was most often driven by local historical memory, local religious sensibility, local conflict, and local actors, and was not easily reframed in a discourse of providentialism, national or protonational political aspiration, or Enlightenment philosophical thinking.'

In stark contrast to Van Young's interpretation and that of the 'local conflict' school of historians, Jaime E. Rodríguez O. has somewhat combatively and stubbornly been advocating the transatlanticist 'collapse of the Spanish monarchy' interpretation for over two decades. The present volume, a reworked translation/English version of his earlier '*Nosotros somos ahora los verdaderos españoles: la transición de la Nueva España de un reino de la Monarquía Española a la República Federal Mexicana, 1808-1824*' (Colegio de Michoacán and Instituto Mora, 2009), brings together Rodríguez's years of research into one final and, it must be said, beautifully illustrated volume. For those who have followed his work over the decades, there is, as a result, little that is particularly novel in this book. In a sense, one suspects that it is meant to be read as the culmination of Rodríguez's lifelong career dedicated to interpreting the origins of the War of Independence and the foundation of the Mexican state; a kind of definitive last say or glorified *refrito*. Consequently all of his well-known customary tropes are reiterated here, at times with dogmatic fervour – namely, that the War of Independence was not an anticolonial struggle and that the insurgency was neither a conflict between Mexico and Spain nor a struggle against an oppressor; that at the beginning, in fact, and following the Napoleonic occupation of the Iberian Peninsula, the population of New Spain sought independence not from the Spanish monarchy but from the French usurpers (Rodríguez does not accept for a moment that there may have been insurgents who masked their independence goals by pretending to defend the cause of the captive Spanish monarch, Ferdinand VII); that poor people engaged with high politics and were conversant with the ideas of the Enlightenment; and, last but not least, that events in Mexico were shaped by the collapse of the Spanish monarchy and the international transatlantic context.

Where Rodríguez's volume is at its most compelling is in its detailed and exhaustive coverage and analysis of how the Cádiz Constitution and its implementation in New Spain impacted upon the war-torn nation. As he forcefully argues: 'It is ironic that scholars have tended to ignore this great political revolution and instead have focused almost exclusively on the insurgencies. By any standard, the political revolution was more profound and extensive than the insurgencies, which have primarily occupied historians' (p. 192). The discussion in chapter 5, 'The Cádiz Revolution', of how the implementation of the Constitution in Mexico, with its institutions and popular elections, politicised the population more than any other event or activity is truly outstanding.

However, without wanting to dispute the historiographical importance of Rodríguez's interpretation, one cannot help noting that his pedantic petulance and intransigent intolerant tone can at times be a touch distracting and tiresome (one of his favourite refrains is 'That is incorrect!'). Those historians who have offered alternative interpretations are consistently presented as being mistaken or quite simply wrong. And he uses the endnotes to highlight what he deems to be the shortcomings, factual errors and supposed misguided versions of just about everybody who has written about this period, including Timothy Anna, Antonio Annino, Alfredo Ávila, Nettie Lee Benson, François-Xavier Guerra, William B. Taylor and Eric Van Young, to name but a few. It turns out that this very reviewer does not seem 'to understand

Mexico's political situation' (p. 439). Notwithstanding Rodríguez's numbing arrogance, there is no denying that this represents a particularly significant contribution to the historiography.

University of St Andrews

WILL FOWLER

J. Lat. Amer. Stud. 46 (2014). doi:10.1017/S0022216X14000601

Matthew Brown and Gabriel Paquette (eds.), *Connections after Colonialism: Europe and Latin America in the 1820s* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2012), pp. xiii + 330, \$54.95, hb and e-book.

In this unique collection, editors Matthew Brown and Gabriel Paquette argue for closer attention to the 1820s, a pivotal decade in the history of modern Latin America and the broader Atlantic world, including Western Europe and the United States, to which it belonged. They stress that, despite the effects of war and revolution, the collapse of Iberian colonial empires, and Latin American political independence, the decade saw much continuity with the colonial period and, above all, persistent connections between Old and New Worlds. Too often, as they explain, these connections have been overlooked by historians seeking to highlight broad patterns of rupture or change; indeed, they, and the 1820s generally, have been subsumed into sweeping narratives of an 'Age of Revolution', a later 'Age of [Neocolonial] Empire' or, among Latin Americanists in particular, postcolonial 'nation-making'. Here, by contrast, these continuities are the main focus of attention.

Showcasing the work of both senior and younger scholars, mostly based in the United States or the United Kingdom, who participated in a 2009 conference at Cambridge, this volume excavates the Europe–Latin America relationship that emerged in the 1820s. Thirteen essays examine diverse aspects of that relationship as it evolved between, on the one hand, the new Latin American nation-states, such as Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, and, on the other, the former colonial powers of Spain and Portugal as well as the era's rising power, Great Britain. Two essays focus on ties between Latin America and, respectively, pre-Risorgimento Italy and the United States. They share a transnational perspective, exploring trends and ideas affecting nations and peoples on both sides of the Atlantic. This approach highlights the richness and complexity of the connections made or reconfigured in the years after Latin American independence; it also shows how change and continuity ran together within the Atlantic World.

Despite the diversity of topics addressed – including, for example, the impact of Rafael Riego's 1820 *pronunciamiento* in Spain and Mexico, the Brazilian origins of Portugal's 1826 Constitution, the political/sectional and ideological conflicts behind the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, and the impact of European advice literature for women – a few common themes lend further unity to the volume. One is the rise of new political cultures. Nowhere is this theme more evident than in the essays analysing the rise and influence of transatlantic liberalism. The ascendant ideology of the era, liberalism united people and politics in both hemispheres. In 'Rafael del Riego and the Spanish Origins of the Nineteenth Century Pronunciamiento', for example, Will Fowler offers a lively, detailed account of how the *pronunciamiento* became a feature of both Spanish and Mexican political life and, more specifically, part of the repertoire of politicians seeking to replicate Riego's success in prying reforms from an absolutist monarch.